MPLS upgrade set to begin this fall

The Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) has awarded a contract to BellSouth Business Systems, Inc. to upgrade the state's wide area network from frame relay to multi-protocol label switching (MPLS) technology.

More than 1,800 existing circuits throughout Georgia will be converted to MPLS over 12 months beginning this fall, and all new circuits will be based on MPLS. BellSouth will also manage major network components.

"The contract marks a major milestone in providing state agencies with a faster, more reliable network," said Tom Wade, GTA executive director and Georgia's chief information officer. "It also means we will be able to take advantage of the latest advances in telecom services and obtain better value for our telecom expenditures."

The contract with BellSouth replaces the state's frame relay and DSL contracts. It sets high performance standards that BellSouth is contractually obligated to meet.

MPLS offers many advantages besides greater reliability and speed.

- The upgrade is an important step in being able to transmit voice, data and video together over a single network. Data transmissions can be assigned a different priority on a case-by-case basis. Certain transmissions—such as video conferencing or those related to law enforcement—could take precedence over other transmissions.

- MPLS will make it easier to meet demands for better security, and it will provide greater technical support for teleworking and wireless services.

- As the state's demand for network capacity grows, MPLS promises to limit future growth in the cost of services because it can be expanded more easily and has more options than frame relay.

New agency council
Linking business needs and technology

A new interagency council has taken on the task of improving the management of state government.

The governance council will help design policies and strategies that lead to more effective and efficient delivery of services. It will oversee the development of an enterprise architecture (EA) for the state. EA ensures that the state's IT infrastructure supports the business needs of agencies. The council will identify opportunities to collaborate and share resources.

Composed of senior staff from 10 agencies, the council complements the work of the Commission for a New Georgia. The council's work is central to the Governor's goal of making Georgia one of the best managed states by 2007.

The council will set priorities for online services and contribute to guidelines for business continuity.

"Each member brings a unique business perspective to the table," said GTA's Cigdem Delano,

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*Bringing the benefits of technology
to Georgia government*

GTA
Georgia Technology Authority

Revised policy sets statewide requirements for monitoring, controlling telecom costs

A revised policy on the use of telecom services and equipment, including cell phones and other wireless devices, took effect August 1, 2004. The policy establishes minimum requirements for monitoring and controlling telecom costs, and it applies to all state departments, institutions, boards, bureaus, agencies, authorities, colleges and universities.

GTA and the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) jointly developed the policy, which is available on GTA's Web site, www.gta.georgia.gov, under Policies & Standards.

> **GTA and OPB jointly developed the policy, which is available on www.gta.georgia.gov under Policies & Standards.**

Among the requirements are
- maintaining inventories of wireless devices, including cell phones and personal digital assistants (PDAs),
- assigning wireless devices to employees based on their job responsibilities,
- limiting long-distance and other calls with charges based on usage, and
- obtaining itemized invoices for telecom services with charges based on usage.

Criteria for determining who gets a cell phone

Agencies must establish written criteria for determining which jobs may be assigned wireless and other mobile devices, including cell phones. The policy provides examples, such as employees who
- work in public safety and homeland security,
- travel more than 25 percent of their work time,
- work at multiple buildings or sites, such as desktop support technicians or delivery personnel,
- must be on call more than two weekends each month,
- must conduct business while commuting or traveling from one appointment to another,
- depend on two-way, real-time communication where stationary telephones are not readily available, including construction sites, highways and college or university campuses.

The policy also permits the use of wireless devices by employees when responding to environmental emergencies or when such devices would provide additional protection in potentially hazardous working conditions.

It calls for agencies to maintain wireless and other mobile devices in a pool for shared use among employees whenever possible.

Employees who qualify for cell phones and other wireless devices must use state-issued equipment. These employees should not use their personal wireless equipment, then apply for reimbursement for business-related use.

However, employees who don't qualify for state-issued cell phones may be reimbursed for occasional business-related calls placed from their personal cell phones under certain circumstances. The policy authorizes such reimbursements only when the calls exceed the minutes included with the employee's service plan. Employees must provide a copy of their cell phone invoice to document charges, including those for roaming and long distance.

GTA offers dial-up Internet access

GTA now offers a convenient new service for agency employees whose jobs involve travel within the state. Dial-up access to the Internet is available through a toll-free number for a flat fee of $11.25 per month per user.

GTA chose LecStar Telecom, Inc. of Atlanta to provide the service after conducting a competitive bid. The company has been in business for more than 30 years, and its customers include well-known U.S. corporations.

The service uses a "point-to-point protocol" to ensure a fast and reliable Internet connection. LecStar guarantees a minimum data-transmission rate of 56K. Problems can be reported directly to LecStar's customer service through a toll-free number 24-hours-a-day, seven days a week.

To order the service, simply contact your GTA regional telecom office. The charges will appear on the monthly bill your agency receives from GTA. ∎

"A unique perspective"
GTA and state agencies provide support for G8 summit

Security, telecommunications and multimedia staff from GTA were on hand to assist with the G8 Summit on Sea Island in June. GTA provided support for essential services and communication as the state played host to leaders from the world's major industrial democracies.

Long before the world leaders arrived, GTA Information Security Manager Walter Tong and staff from the **Georgia Bureau of Investigation** (GBI) were involved in security planning. "The GBI played a critical role," Mr. Tong said. "We couldn't have done it without them."

Beginning in November 2003, the team worked closely with local, state and federal agencies, local law enforcement and private sector partners to ensure that plans for restoring essential services (in the event of an inadvertent or deliberate disruption) were developed and submitted ahead of schedule. During the summit, they coordinated security-related responses and maintenance activities.

"Cooperation among representatives of the public and private sectors was outstanding," Mr. Tong said. "Everyone pitched in to make sure the summit ran smoothly."

Planning also began several months in advance for Jim Mollohan, Wray Hall and Naomi Richardson from GTA's telecom division. They supplied pagers to the **Georgia Emergency Management Agency** and coordinated radio frequency use to ensure communication across participating local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. Workers from GTA's regional telecom office in Savannah provided logistical support.

GTA assisted the **Georgia State Patrol** and **Homeland Security** in assembling and configuring about 1,000 portable radios to be issued to law enforcement officers who would make up the Mobile Task Force for the summit.

GTA media producer, Steve Carey (second from left) led a production crew composed of Wayne Petty, Amy Cooper, Kevin Williams, all from GTA, and Roger McLeod from the Georgia Public Safety Training Center.

According to Mr. Hall, the number of entities involved meant that the possibility of radio interference was high. "We were able to identify and clear channels that could be used by G8 participants and obtain approval from the Federal Communications Commission for temporary use of additional channels," he said. "As a result, we actually experienced very little interference."

In addition to distributing approximately 500 pagers, GTA staff also made sure that the area had necessary coverage. A new paging transmitter was installed on a leased tower nearby.

"It was remarkable to see so many state, local and federal law enforcement officers coming together to perform public safety functions in such an efficient manner," Mr. Hall said.

At the request of the GBI, GTA media producer Steve Carey led a production crew of three GTA staff and another employee on loan from the **Georgia Public Safety Training Center** to document

Jim Mollohan, Wray Hall, Naomi Richardson, (seated) all from GTA; Jerry "Jay" Sexton, Georgia Tech Research Institute; and Yowanda Kendricks, Department of Corrections, assisted with telecommunications during the G8 Summit.

Project management symposium draws hundreds

More than 350 people gathered to expand their project management skills at a recent GTA-sponsored symposium. Most of the participants represented agencies in state government.

The theme of the day-long program was "Improving Execution through Project Management in Government and Higher Education." Other sponsors included the **University System of Georgia, Georgia State University,** the City of Atlanta and the Atlanta Chapter of the Project Management Institute.

Project management experts from the public and private sectors talked to participants about

Participants applaud during GTA's project management symposium on June 25, 2004.

aligning projects with strategic objectives, gettingteam members to contribute, and overcoming particular challenges in government and higher education. This year's symposium offered a more extensive curriculum and attracted twice as many participants as the program held last year.

"Response has been extremely positive," said Chalanda Tucker of GTA's project management office. "We're already planning a symposium for 2005." ▮

The policy encourages the issuance of calling cards to employees who are frequently away from their office but often need to make long distance calls.

Budgeting for "usage sensitive" telecom services

Expenditures for wireless devices and telecom services with charges based on usage must be reported separately from other telecom services in each agency's annual budget request to OPB.

The budget request must include an inventory of the agency's wireless devices, and the agency is required to list all wireless devices it plans to acquire in the next fiscal year. The agency must also include total expenditures for each category of wireless devices in previous fiscal years and a budget for current and future fiscal years.

Mandatory use of statewide telecom contracts

The policy requires all state entities to use statewide contracts for telecom services and equipment whenever such contracts exist. GTA recently awarded new statewide contracts for telecom equipment. In addition, a statewide contract for wireless services and devices is scheduled to be awarded this fall. ▮

Security pros train at boot camps

GTA and the **Department of Technical and Adult Education** are teaming up again this summer to sponsor boot camps for IT professionals responsible for operating and securing agency computer networks.

A boot camp in July covered intrusion detection and virtual private network configuration. Another session scheduled for early August is focusing on the fundamentals of wireless networking, including deploying and troubleshooting wireless networks.

The weeklong sessions offer participants valuable hands-on training. "We've been sponsoring boot camps for the past couple of years, and response has been great," said Walter Tong, GTA information security manager. "Participants tell us that they like getting concentrated information they can take back to their agencies and use immediately."

For more information about boot camps, contact Mr. Tong at 404-463-2182 or wtong@gta.ga.gov. ▮

• MPLS lays a solid foundation for eventually offering telecom services not previously available to state agencies, such as Voice over IP (VoIP), a potentially more economical alternative to traditional telephone service.

The contract is valued at about $10 million annually for six years.

A schedule for the initial circuit migrations is being developed.

Consolidated purchasing power saves agencies money

GTA negotiates technology contracts on behalf of all state agencies. By consolidating state government's purchasing power, GTA obtains more competitive pricing and enhanced services. This year, GTA assisted state agencies in identifying unused circuits as they prepared for the MPLS upgrade, thereby reducing annual telecom expenses by $1.2 million. GTA saved another $2.7 million in state and federal funds by renegotiating telecom contracts, reconciling billing errors and disconnecting unnecessary telephone lines.

In 2003, GTA identified savings of more than $5.5 million by dismantling the state-operated long distance network and renegotiating long distance rates. ▮

> **The contract marks a major milestone in providing state agencies with a faster, more reliable network.**

Update on statewide contracts

New two-way radio contract offers more choice

GTA has issued a new two-way radio equipment contract that gives agencies a wider selection of two-way radio products for the VHF and UHF frequency bands.

Previously, the contract was awarded to the lowest compliant bidder in each category of equipment. The new contract includes all the vendors that met the mandatory specifications within each category. This allows agencies to compare features and pricing among several vendors and choose the one that best meets their needs.

The contract also includes digital models for each category, which allows agencies to improve both coverage and audio quality for their systems. The digital models are backward compatible to the current analog models, which means that agencies can move to the digital technology as funds become available.

The procedure for purchasing radio equipment from the new contract remains the same as outlined in the Enterprise Standard ENT-09-0011-STD. For more information on this contract, contact Wray Hall at whall@gta.ga.gov. ▮

Enterprise contracts now easier to find online

Agencies looking for enterprise contracts now have an easier way to find them, thanks to an improved interface on the GTA Web site.

From the Procurement page, users can now view contracts within three simple categories: hardware, software and services. Another link lists all contracts alphabetically.

Information is also closer to the top level. Instead of having to download a PDF to receive general information, users can now see it instantly online. This information is only two clicks away from the Procurement main page, instead of three or sometimes four clicks on the old site. Accompanying information such as price lists can be downloaded from the contract's main page.

To access the site, go to www.gta.georgia.gov and click on "Procurement" in the left-hand menu.

Future improvements to the site will include a contract administration handbook, checklists and templates to help procurement officers with their daily activities. ▮

Searches on www.georgia.gov powered by Google

Visitors to www.georgia.gov can now quickly and accurately locate the information they need on the state portal using technology already familiar to many Web users.

GTA recently launched the Google search appliance on the state portal. The index is updated daily, providing the most comprehensive search collection of State of Georgia documents of all types, including PDF, Word, Excel and even PowerPoint presentations. The index collection includes 225,000 documents, about 50 percent more than were previously available.

The software used by Google's search technology conducts a series of simultaneous calculations in less than a second. "What that means for portal users is more relevant matches when they're searching for information," said Bill

Overall, creative director for www.georgia.gov. "They'll find more information, and they'll find it much faster than before."

Google also helps users get the information they want—sometimes even anticipating what they may want. For example, someone who enters "jobs" as a keyword in a search will receive links to sites for job openings across the state (through the Georgia Department of Labor) and careers in state government (through the Georgia Merit System).

According to Mr. Overall, the Google search appliance is a good value for the state. "Because the technology is self-contained in the form of an appliance, it does not require a programmer or system reconfiguration," he said. "It costs less to operate than the previous search engine used on the state portal." ▮

Governance Council, from page 1

who chairs the council. "This approach will help ensure that we make the important connection between agencies' business needs and technology solutions." ▮

Governance Council Members

Chris Ash, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Paul Burkhalter, Natural Resources
Debbie Dlugolenski, Technical & Adult Education
Robert Giacomini, Office of Planning & Budget
Gina Simpson, Human Resources
Mike Hall, Education
Marty Horne, Motor Vehicle Safety
Brad Hudson, Revenue
Laura Meadows, Office of the Secretary of State
Arnold Smith, Corrections
Joy Hawkins, Office of the Governor
Celeste Osborn, Office of the Governor
Cigdem Delano, Chair, GTA

G8 Summit, from page 3

on video the participation of federal, state and local agencies and law enforcement. They will produce an after–action report as well as a documentary.

Their days began at 7:30 a.m. and stretched toward midnight. Because they would be in the middle of the action, Mr. Carey and his crew were fitted for riot gear and trained to use gas masks. Fortunately, neither was necessary.

"Our work gave us a unique perspective," Mr. Carey said. "We were interacting with everyone from the Coast Guard to the Secret Service. We videotaped Instant Response Teams and motorcades of dignitaries and worked amid protesters."

He added that he was glad to be part of the extensive support GTA provided the summit. "This event had the world's attention, and it went extremely well. GTA really has something to be proud of." ▮